

THE WAE OF TERROR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF RECENT TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THREE INDONETION NEWS PUBLICATIONS WITHIN A CONTEXT OF CULTURAL AND SOSIAL TRANSITION

**PRAYUDI
TH. 2010**

SUMMARY

Mass media and issue of terrorism are inseparable. The representation of terrorism in the Indonesian mass media is the result of a complex construction process which incorporates cultural, political economic and industrial factors. The most recent and publicly extant examples of terrorism in Indonesia have been associated with the more militant components of radical Islam. Some well publicized terrorist attacks have been occurring since the fall of President Suharto's New Order regime in 1998. This research looks at how the meaning of news representation of issue of terrorism in three Indonesian news publications has been constructed and how the meaning of issue of terrorism in three Indonesian news publications.

The objective of the thesis is to define and analyse the construction of meaning of the news representation of current terrorist attacks in three news publications in Indonesia. Analysis will be focused on the cultural or historical, political and industrial factors that contribute to the production of news. In particular, the analysis will focus on the 2002 Bali bombing, the 2003 JW Marriott Hotel bombing and the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing. The euphoria that has emerged around the Reformasi and reformation era has given the Indonesian media institutions freedom to report any issues without fear of being banned by the government. Nonetheless, the Indonesian news media are influenced by their cultural, political, and industrial factors when reporting potentially divisive issues like terrorism and religion. Within news media institutions, the interplay of these various factors contributes to the way news media represents issue of terrorism.

This study employed a cultural studies methodology to understand how media institutions and their professional journalists represent issues of terrorism. The approach emphasizes the interplay between lived experience, text or discourses, and the social context or the interplay between audience, text and producers. Data was gathered from news items in three national publications. Data analysis techniques included contextualism and textual analysis. The techniques were used to analyse why the media represent the issue of recent terrorist attacks in Indonesia with particular orientation. The analysis was especially emphasized on the cultural, political and industrial context of the representation. I looked at why and how the issue of terrorism came to surface and its relation to radical Islamicism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, how it affected Indonesian social and political conditions and how the Indonesian government policy dealt with the issue. At the same time, I also looked at how all this conditions affect the way Indonesian news publications report the issue which at the same time have their own industrial background in reporting sensitive issues like terrorism. Thus, the contextual and textual modes of analysis deployed forms of 'empirical' research which are constituted through a close reading of texts, historical analysis and direct interviews with professional journalists.

Research analyses indicate that the three news publications under study played their role as a story teller of the issue of terrorism. They had incorporated cultural, political as well as industrial factors in the construction the news of terrorism. Despite playing role as the storyteller, different vision, mission, and contexts of the three news media had resulted in the different editorial policies in representing issue of terrorism. The news representation

of three terrorist events in *the Jakarta Post* had been constructed mostly within the political perspective. This can be seen from the representation of government policy on terrorism and national security, how the Indonesian government managed the acts of terror and how the Indonesian society accepted the facts that terrorism did exist in Indonesia. In general, the *Post* showed its support toward the issue of regulations to combat terrorism, but at the same time warned the government to carefully implement the regulations as these may be against human rights and the 1945 Constitutions. On another issue, the *Post* criticized lack of intelligence coordination among government authority agencies that had led to the acts of terror to occur. Conflict of intelligence and counter-terrorism roles between the police and the military (TNI) became the main focus of *the Post* representation. Meanwhile, the last representation of the issue indicates how *the Post* had brought to surface the issue of the existence of terrorism in Indonesia and the importance of dialogue on the issue of fundamentalism and radicalism in Islam.

On the contrary, with the vision to be an 'information controlling and Islamic advocating media', *Sabili*, the second media under study, clearly places itself as a news media that defends the interests of Islam and Muslim. Its representation of terrorism issue described the vision and mission of the news magazine. In doing so, *Sabili* tended to interview news sources that principally explained Islam was not identical with radicalism or violence. Consequently, it represented the bombing events as western (American) government scenario to shape global opinion that Indonesia in particular and South East Asia in general had become a terrorist haven. Implicit in this representation was *Sabili's* criticism toward Indonesian government for its weak attitude and the tendency to follow the will of western (American) governments in return for international aid. In another issue, *Sabili* denied the existence of *Jemaah Islamiyah*. It is not because of the support of this news magazine toward the radical group, but the impacts that led to the capture of Islamic activists that *Sabili* opposed. Further, it also warned public of the possibilities to create conflict within Islamic society as in the New Order regime. Meanwhile, last representation of the issue signifies *Sabili's* political as well as humanitarian perspectives. It principally criticized the implementation of antiterrorism act that had violated human rights. It worried that the act would be systematically used to capture Islamic activists. Further, *Sabili* gave attention on the impact of the arrest toward the families.

Meanwhile, in the analysis of the third news media, *Tempo's* representation of terrorism had been delivered through a professional practice of journalism. It stayed neutral from the conflict. It principally adopted fair, check and balanced, cover both sides' principles. Actuality, in-depth and accuracy in reporting represent *Tempo's* strong and independent editorial policy. The representation of three bombing events in *Tempo's* news magazine had been constructed through cultural and political perspectives. This can be analysed from the representation of the description of the bombings, the investigation process conducted by the police, and the disclosure of the terrorist network. Principally, *Tempo's* representation of the description of the bombings from humanitarian perspective was meant to awaken its readers and public in general that no groups were allowed to use violence against other people to reach their goals. Through this representation, *Tempo* criticized the Indonesian government seriousness in combating terrorism as bombing attacks kept happening within the country. *Tempo* also gave attention to the investigation process conducted by the police. The selection of this issue was to inform public of the progress the police had done regarding the acts of terror. Implicit in the representation was the way Megawati's government handled the 2002 Bali bombing had contributed to the

decrease of her reputation in the 2004 general election. This was signified by the quarrel between vice president and minister of defence. In the last representation, *Tempo* carefully reported the suspected terrorist network, *Jemaah Islamiyah*. It was meant to avoid a judgement as if Islam-as the dominant religion embraced by Indonesian society-identical with terrorism activities. *Tempo* attempted to inform as well as to educate public that there were groups within society that had misused Islamic values for their acts of terror. Thus, *Tempo's* vision to be 'the guidance in the process of enhancing people's freedom of thought and expression and to build society that appreciates smartness and difference of opinion' was realised through the publication of reliable news media.

In general, the three news media had represented the issue of terrorism by taking into account cultural, political, and industrial factors. Within each of these news media, these factors are treated differently. Consequently, there are contrast representations of the terrorism events.